

same sudden onset and disappearance, and the same areas affected (with one exception noted above). In that it did not correspond with or symbolise any event which was at the time unknown to them but of which they subsequently became aware, it was not veridical. On the other hand, one cannot say whether the predominant feature of the experience—the yellow colour—possessed an unconscious significance for one or both of them. A psycho-analytical inquiry might have thrown some light on this.

Collective hallucinations reported to the Society are, naturally enough, usually those which appear to contain a veridical element. It is possible that experiences of this nature which are not manifestly veridical may occur more frequently than is commonly thought. It is fortunate that the present case involved two people who not only realized its interest but were aware of the importance of the evidential aspect. In the latter connexion it may be noted that Mr Chesters is a solicitor and that Miss Crowley comes from a legal family. We are much indebted to them for the care with which they observed and recorded their experience, and for their willing submission to so many questions concerning it.

DR GELEY'S REPORTS ON THE MEDIUM EVA C.

BY RUDOLF LAMBERT

TRANSLATED BY AVA NANGIE

THE history of the medium Eva C. (Marthe Béraud) from about 1904 to 1914 is known to the members of the S.P.R. through the excellent account by Mrs Salter (at that time Miss Verrall) which was published in Volume xxvii of *Proceedings* (p. 333 ff.) in 1914. Mrs Salter did not reach a definite decision on the authenticity of the phenomena—indeed, she doubted whether any solution was possible unless Eva C. could be induced to accept more stringent conditions.

A positive solution to the problem appeared to many to have been reached when Dr Gustave Geley delivered his lecture 'Sur la physiologie dite supranormale' at the Collège de France in 1918 which was published shortly afterwards. In it Geley reported on several very convincing and striking observations with Eva C., which he also repeated in his books *De l'Inconscient au Conscient* (Alcan, 1919) and *L'Ectoplasmie et la Clairvoyance* (Alcan, 1924). I quote from the latter book the two best of these apparently well-evidenced observations.

Here is an example taken from my notebook: a cord of white substance, about the width of two fingers, descends from Eva's mouth

to her knees ; before our eyes this ribbon takes on a great variety of shapes : sometimes it spreads out like a wide piece of perforated membranous fabric (mesh), with gaps and swellings ; sometimes it is all gathered up together and grows narrow, then it billows out and is finally stretched out once more. Here and there appear extensions from the main part, like pseudopods, which sometimes for several seconds look like fingers or sketchy hands, but which then return to the mass of substance. Finally the cord draws itself together and hangs down over Eva's knees ; then the end rises, leaves the medium and comes towards me. I notice that the end is thickening, as if it were swelling with a terminal bud which spreads out in the form of a perfectly modelled hand. I touch this hand. It seems quite normal ; I can feel the bones and the fingers with their nails. Then the hand contracts, gets smaller and disappears at the end of the cord. The cord moves about, then withdraws and re-enters the medium's mouth (p. 201).

Second example :

Suddenly a head appears, about 75 cm. (30 inches) from Eva's head, above and behind her. It is a well-formed man's head of normal size showing the usual reliefs. The top of the head and the forehead are perfectly materialised. The forehead is wide and high, the hair stubbly and thick, either auburn or black. Below the brows the contours are uncertain and only the top of the head and the forehead can be seen clearly.

The head disappears for a moment behind the curtain, then reappears as before, but the incompletely materialised face is masked by a band of white substance. I stretch out my hand and slip my fingers through the bushy hair and feel the bones of the skull . . . a moment later everything had disappeared (p. 202).

Mr E. J. Dingwall comments as follows on the latter incident (*Proc. S.P.R.*, xxxii, 317) :

Unfortunately Dr Geley does not give the necessary details for us to be able to understand the precise conditions which were obtaining when the above phenomenon took place. It is clear that the head was not perfectly formed except in its upper part, and this Dr Geley was able to feel and even press with his fingers. How this is to be accounted for on the hypothesis of fraud I do not know, unless we assume that the observers are incapable of any accurate observation at all.

It is true that Geley's communications were already giving cause for reflection. With regard to the control of Eva's hands Geley says : (*L'Ectoplasmie et la Clairvoyance*, p. 198) : 'Her hands always remained in sight and were held outside the curtains.'

This description of hand control gave Mr Dingwall the opportunity to make the following downright refutation (*Proc. S.P.R.*, xxxiv, 332 n) : 'An examination of his [Dr Geley's] accompanying photographs shows that in the only *four* which show *both* hands, in *one* only is *one* hand held!' (Compare Figs. 22, 23, 27, and 34

in Geley's book.) It appears to me that both of Eva's hands are also visible in a fifth photograph (Fig. 38), but again only *one*, the left, is lightly controlled. It is very striking that, in this Fig. 38, Eva's right hand has two rings on it, whereas in Fig. 37 which, it is alleged, was taken an instant before, Eva's right hand is ringless, from which it follows that after his sittings Geley was not always sure of the sequence of his photographs and sometimes fixed their order later on arbitrarily, and probably even attached the pictures from several sittings to the report of a *single* sitting.

This inexactitude shows how little value can be placed on Geley's assertions. In his first two publications in 1918 and 1919 Geley gives no reports of single sittings and the observations made at them, but only a comprehensive report from which the two incidents quoted were taken. This kind of presentation is justifiable in scientific work where results can be tested by others at any time: but in so rare and questionable a matter as materialisations, where the data cannot be tested by other workers on account of the rarity of good mediums, such a comprehensive report does not meet strict scientific demands.

Subsequently, to remedy this fault, Geley published in his third work in 1924 (*L'Ectoplasme et la Clairvoyance*) 'a detailed account of the chief sittings held in my laboratory, with the photographs referring to them' (p. 205). But these eight reports are extremely disappointing, since they contain hardly any information about controls, lighting, or the actual width of opening in the cabinet curtains. In all eight reports, with regard to controls, the statement is made: 'the usual control and precautions'. This meagre information is supplemented in only three reports by incidental remarks about the control of Eva's hands and knees. As to lighting, 'strong red light' is mentioned in the first sitting (11 January 1918), 'red light' in the second sitting (15 January 1918), while in the other six reports no mention is made of the lighting; yet, in order to pass judgment on the exactitude of Geley's observations, everything hangs on the strength of the light as well as on the width of opening in the cabinet curtains, but nothing is said about this latter point in five of the eight reports. In the second report (15 January 1918) it is stated right at the beginning that 'the curtains remain half-open'. One cannot discover in any of the reports what exactly is meant by 'half-open'. Towards the middle of the seventh report (8 March 1918) he says: 'Eva was visible through the aperture in the half-open curtains'. Right at the beginning of the eighth report (11 March 1918) he states: 'throughout this sitting the curtain remained half-open.' As this could not be foreseen at the beginning of the sitting, one is forced

to the conclusion that these reports must sometimes only have been put together some hours or days after the sitting. Since Geley never mentions the presence of a note-taker and gives no clear indication of time, there can be no doubt that he did not dictate these reports at the sitting, as was the case at the S.P.R. sittings with Eva (*Proc. S.P.R.*, xxxii). In view of the proved unreliability of Geley's memory, what then is the scientific value of the eight reports, six of which may be explained by the regurgitation hypothesis, as in four of the reports a materialisation disappeared into Eva's mouth, while in two others a materialisation came out of her mouth?

Since the unreliability of Geley's methods and those of other investigators of Eva had gradually become more and more clear to me, it was no wonder that I went to the Third International Congress on Psychical Research in Paris at the end of September 1927 in a sceptical frame of mind towards Eva's materialisations. There I met Count Perovsky-Petrovo-Solovovo, and learnt from him that Mme Bisson, Eva's patron, had been excluded from the French Committee of the Congress, presumably because certain of Dr Osty's discoveries amongst Geley's literary remains pointed to Mme Bisson's fraudulent co-operation in Eva's materialisations. He knew nothing more about these discoveries. At the first opportunity I told Dr Osty what Count Perovsky had said and asked him if it were true. Dr Osty was evasive but I told him that his attitude confirmed Perovsky's information in the main, whereupon he invited me to visit him the following day at the Institut Métapsychique where he would show me the documents, but only if I promised him not to reveal anything about it outside and especially not to Count Perovsky, whom he considered to be a most dangerous 'negativist'. As I wanted to know the truth about Eva C., I gave this promise reluctantly. When I went to see Osty at the Institute the following morning he showed me several stereoscopic photographs from among Geley's papers. One could distinguish clearly that the respective materialisations were artificially attached to Eva's hair, partly by means of Eva's hair, which sometimes also had to represent the materialisation's hair, and partly by means of threads or wires, which Eva's adherents would doubtless have claimed as also having been materialised. However that may be, the appearance of these pictures was highly suspicious and shocking. One can easily envisage how certain materialisations could have been fastened to Eva's hair from the photographs published by Geley in *L'Ectoplasmie et la Clairvoyance* (38, 40, 42, 43, 44); but only in the stereoscopic photographs can the artificial fastening be clearly distinguished. Like Osty I could

not avoid the conclusion that this was a case of grotesque fraud ; and, when I look back on it, I am still almost completely convinced that these materialisations photographed by Geley are fraudulent.

Osty also told me that he wanted to publish his discovery. As, however, Richet and Schrenck-Notzing protested energetically against it and M. Jean Meyer, a militant spiritualist, who financed the Institut Métapsychique, also forcibly demanded the concealment of the scandal, Osty had to give up the idea of publishing his discovery. But, by exerting a certain amount of pressure, he did at least manage to have Eva's patron, Mme Bisson, excluded from the French Congress Committee, whereupon she absented herself from the Congress.

It may be asked why I was so shocked by Osty's communication when only a few years before I had been so enthusiastic about Eva C. on account of Schrenck's books and Geley's work. The chief reason is that in Geley's book no mention is made of details, such as are described in Schrenck-Notzing's main book on Eva C., making it very difficult to accept the occurrences as genuine ; now I had found that Geley had merely suppressed the suspicious particulars. In the meantime I had had plenty of reason to doubt Schrenck's scientific integrity also.

In his full report of the Third International Congress on Psychical Research in Paris, published in the journal *XX^e Siècle* in Brussels at the end of 1927, Count Perovsky deduces from Osty's discovery, so far as it was known to him, the involvement of Mme Bisson, and Count Klinckowstroem makes the same suggestion more emphatically in a paper in the third volume of the *Zeitschrift für kritischen Okkultismus*, No. 2. But this inference misses the real point. Anyone who considers the whole thing to be fraudulent—in spite of the astounding fact that over a period of many years no materials for the production of her materialisations could be found on Eva, although a thorough search was often made before and after sittings—will certainly consider it very probable that Mme Bisson, who was present at all the sittings, was not only Eva's protector but also her accomplice. As, however, Osty's discovery throws no really new light on Eva's phenomena for the attentive reader of Schrenck's work *Materialisations-phänomene*—for Schrenck had published very similar, very suspicious pictures and commented on them with surprising frankness—so, in the main, no stronger suspicion attaches to Mme Bisson after Osty's discovery than at the time of Schrenck's publications.

On the other hand, Osty's discovery completely shakes one's faith in the credibility of Geley's already questionable reports. If Geley did not notice the obvious and highly suspicious construc-

tion of numerous materialisations in Eva's hair in the very clear stereoscopic photographs, then he was 'incapable of any accurate observation at all'. If, however, he did notice this very suspicious circumstance but never mentioned it in his three publications about Eva C., then he shows that he was determined, whatever the reason, to suppress anything which might cause his readers to doubt the credibility of his results.

In view of the worthlessness of Geley's testimony, how should we now pronounce on the two statements quoted on pp. 380-1, which previously sounded so convincing? First, it is striking that amongst the reports of eight sittings published by Geley in 1924 there is no account of those sittings in which Geley is supposed to have observed the two unusual phenomena; the names of witnesses are not even known. Three possible explanations of these two statements are available:

(1) The reports give a faithful account of what was observed by all the sitters, apart from certain displacements due to their different positions, and of what would also have been recorded by ciné-photography during the sitting. If this were so, many of Eva's phenomena were probably genuine.

(2) Geley only inserted in his reports a part of what he actually observed; indeed, he consciously and intentionally embellished his reports so as to afford the greatest support to his dynamic-psychical philosophy.

(3) Geley had a psychical defect—such a thirst for marvels that he entirely yielded to the temptation to take a substantial, if unconscious, part in their production. I think it likely that the development of many materialisations, alleged to have taken place under Geley's direct observation, was in fact interrupted by repeated closing of the curtains, which allowed Eva to prepare her formations undisturbed, so that Geley, who had worked himself up into the requisite state of creative, fantastic expectancy, was able to imagine he witnessed independent developing materialisations. In his enthusiasm Geley would have considered the frequent closing of the curtains, if he had even noticed it, as so immaterial that he might pass it over in his reports, just as he did the frequent fastening of materialisations to Eva's hair, as if they were trifling incidents. Geley's attitude may have been further complicated by the state of joyful expectancy in which he viewed and sometimes photographed the lifeless structures which Eva produced behind scarcely opened curtains in moderate red light. The hallucinatory effect of skilful suggestions from Eva or Mme Bisson would then have caused him to see the materialisations

in the more perfect form in which he described them in his statements quoted at the beginning. This would be quite possible in a man with a strong visualising predisposition. It is also possible that in his carelessly compiled reports he unconsciously worked into *one* experience the incidents of many sittings.

In view of the alarming deficiencies in his method of reporting, we can scarcely credit the first of these three explanations of Geley's statements, especially as he notoriously wrote his reports from memory some time after the sittings and his recollection was often at fault.

Nor do I think the second explanation likely, although it is possible that many reports of occult phenomena are actually written with the express purpose of deceiving readers; but Geley was obviously an idealist, as his book *De l'Inconscient au Conscient* shows, even if he went astray, and I would not impute to him a conscious intention to cheat. Had that been the case, he would at least have arranged his data on hand controls and the choice of photographs so that his statements appeared to some extent credible to sceptical readers, whereas his work on Eva seems to have taken shape in an irrational mental state which paid no heed to contradictions.

The third explanation of Geley's reports must surely be the correct one. It presumes that Geley, although very gifted in other respects, was subject to illusions and hallucinations 'that made him incapable of any accurate observation at all', when he attempted to realise his loftiest strivings and hopes for mankind by the help of our field of enquiry.

Now that twenty-five years have passed since Osty showed me the unpublished stereoscopic pictures which he had found among Geley's papers after his death, there appears to be no reason for further secrecy. I have therefore felt it to be my duty to report Geley's suppression of highly suspicious details from his published work.¹

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¹ Since Herr Lambert considers that the procedure followed by Dr Geley and those who suppressed Osty's discovery may be more frequent in our field of study than is generally supposed, he sets out in the second part of his communication, which is not printed here for lack of space, the conditions which he thinks should be observed to make experiments fraud-proof. In the light of these conditions he criticises the Martin-Stribic ESP experiments and also some of the views expressed by Dr Soal in his Presidential Address to the Society. Herr Lambert's complete communication has been placed in the Society's library, where it may be consulted by members.